

Categorical Exclusion Determination
Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Urgent Communication System and Access Road Repair at Walker Mountain Radio Site

PP&A No.: 4568

Project Manager: Donna Martin – TEPF-TPP-3

Location: Klamath County, Oregon

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine Maintenance; B1.19 Microwave, Meteorological, and Radio Towers

Description of the Proposed Action: The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to replace damaged communication equipment on an existing radio tower at Walker Mountain radio site and perform maintenance activities on the access road serving the Walker Mountain radio site. The proposed work is necessary to restore full communication in the BPA Redmond District.

The damaged communication equipment includes an antenna and associated hardware that would be replaced in-kind. No ground disturbing activities are proposed at Walker Mountain radio site.

The Walker Mountain Radio site must be accessed with a line truck which would require improvements to the existing access road. The access road work would include about 4 miles of roadway improvement (gravel road improvement) and the addition of about 46 water bars. The project would include reshaping, grading, and compacting existing road surface as well as hauling, placing, and shaping of crushed rock. The work would also include brush clearing and side-limbing of trees up to 15 feet to allow access for the line truck. General equipment used for this type of road work includes: graders, rollers, bull-dozers, and dump trucks. The access road improvements would preserve and repair the existing road, maintain roadway safety, and manage storm water run-off.

Findings: In accordance with Section 1021.410(b) of the Department of Energy's (DOE) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Regulations (57 FR 15144, Apr. 24, 1992, as amended at 61 FR 36221-36243, Jul. 9, 1996; 61 FR 64608, Dec. 6, 1996, 76 FR 63764, Nov. 14, 2011), BPA has determined that the proposed action:

- 1) fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix B of 10 CFR 1021, Subpart D (see attached Environmental Checklist);
- 2) does not present any extraordinary circumstances that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal; and
- 3) has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion.

Based on these determinations, BPA finds that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

/s/ Michelle Colletti

Michelle Colletti
Physical Scientist

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: November 16, 2020

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

Categorical Exclusion Environmental Checklist

This checklist documents environmental considerations for the proposed project and explains why the project would not have the potential to cause significant impacts on environmentally sensitive resources and would meet other integral elements of the applied categorical exclusion.

Proposed Action: Urgent Communication System and Access Road Repair at Walker Mountain Radio Site

Project Site Description

The project activities would be conducted along BPA the existing BPA Walker Mountain communication/radio site and access roads leading to the radio site. The site is located on Forest Service land in the Deschutes National Forest and a small section of the Fremont-Winema National Forest. Adjacent land uses primarily consist of forest management. The project area leads to small mountain tops. Vegetation consists of primarily conifer trees.

Radio Site	Township	Range	Section	County	Ownership/Land use
Walker Mountain	26S	8E	45, 46, 49, 50	Klamath	USFS Deschutes's National Forest and Fremont – Winema National Forest
	27S	8E	37		

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA initiated consultation with the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the Klamath Tribes, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon (CTWSRO), and the Deschutes National Forest on January 28, 2020, and with Fremont-Winema National Forest on November 12, 2020. Oregon SHPO provided concurrence with the area of potential effect (APE) on February 18, 2020. Concurrence with the APE was also provided by the Klamath Tribes on February 14, 2020, and by CTWSRO on February 21, 2020.

After BPA determined that implementation of this project was urgent, the BPA archaeologist contacted the consulting parties by phone and email between November 12, 2020 and November 16, 2020. Concurrence on BPA's proposed approach to avoidance flagging, monitoring, inventory, and reporting was received on November 12, 2020 from the Klamath Tribes, CTWSRO, and Deschutes National Forest, and on November 13, 2020 from Fremont-Winema National Forest. Six voicemail messages were left and three emails sent to Oregon SHPO staff members on November 12, 13, and 16, 2020; no response was received from the Oregon SHPO.

Review of the proposed scope of work by the BPA historian has demonstrated that the Walker Mountain Radio Site is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The impact of the proposed vegetation removal, access road improvements, and staging areas would be assessed through pedestrian survey and monitoring by BPA archaeologists and an archaeological consultant during construction work, currently scheduled for November and December 2020. Previously recorded historic properties in the APE would be avoided by the proposed work. The BPA archaeologist would email consulting parties with the results of inventory and monitoring at the conclusion of construction work, and submit an inventory report for consultation thereafter.

Note:

- A BPA archaeologist, BPA contract archaeologist, or archaeological consultant would flag previously recorded historic properties for avoidance during construction work.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Localized soil disturbance would occur during access road maintenance activities. Standard construction erosion control measures would be utilized as necessary.

3. Plants (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal/state special-status plants are present. Project activities would be limited to the already impacted road prism and graveled communication site and would not substantially alter existing plant communities.

4. Wildlife (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal/state special-status species were identified within the project area. Project activities would temporarily disturb local wildlife during construction, but the disturbance would be limited to the already impacted access road and communication site and would not substantially alter the long term footprint or operational noise of the access road and communication site; therefore, wildlife and associated habitat would not be affected in the long term.

5. Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish (including Federal/state special-status species, ESUs, and habitats)

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: None present in the project area.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: None present in the project area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project activities are not expected to impact groundwater or aquifers. The proposed work is in an upland area with no subsurface disturbance.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The project would not result in permanent changes or impacts to land use.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would be performed within existing communication system right of ways and access road. Replacement of communication equipment and associated components would be in-kind and in the same location.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Exhaust and dust from utility and construction equipment may temporarily reduce air quality in the immediate project area.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction noise would be temporary and would occur during daylight hours.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA personnel would develop a site-specific health and safety plan to address any hazards during the proposed work. The proposed work is necessary to ensure ongoing safe and reliable operation of the transmission system and to maintain power delivery in the region.

Evaluation of Other Integral Elements

The proposed project would also meet conditions that are integral elements of the categorical exclusion. The project would not:

Threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, or similar requirements of DOE or Executive Orders.

Explanation: N/A

Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation: N/A

Disturb hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or CERCLA excluded petroleum and natural gas products that preexist in the environment such that there would be uncontrolled or unpermitted releases.

Explanation: N/A

Involve genetically engineered organisms, synthetic biology, governmentally designated noxious weeds, or invasive species, unless the proposed activity would be contained or confined in a manner designed and operated to prevent unauthorized release into the environment and conducted in accordance with applicable requirements, such as those of the Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Institutes of Health.

Explanation: N/A

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: BPA would perform the proposed work under the emergency designation outlined in the *Memorandum of Understanding between the Bonneville Power Administration United States Department of Energy and the United States Forest Service United States Department of Agriculture Regarding Transmission Facilities and Access to Those Facilities on National Forest System Lands Standard Operation Procedures, Section VIII Emergency Maintenance*. As such, no pre-notification is required; however, BPA really began coordination with the Deschutes and Fremont-Winema National Forest on November 12, 2020.

Based on the foregoing, this proposed project does not have the potential to cause significant impacts to any environmentally sensitive resource.

Signed: Michelle Colletti
Michelle Colletti, EPR-4
Physical Scientist

Date: November 16, 2020